

outposts

No. 5
(1945)

EDITED BY
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NORMAN HAMPSON
ROBIN ATTHILL
EITHNE WILKINS
WILFRED H. BARTLETT
M. J. STEVENS
ERNST SIGLER
STANLEY SNAITH
ELLODE COLLINS
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EDWARD TOEMAN
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AN ASPECT OF MODERN POETRY by NORMAN NICHOLSON

REVIEWS, &c.

Cover Design : MARJORIE H. SNOWDEN



PRICE ONE SHILLING

SONG

NORMAN HAMPSON

FULL in your beauty's April
My rebel angel, pause,
Though your step be soft as thistledown
Your hair like golden gauze,
Full in your beauty's April
My rebel angel, pause.

Dreaming of Summer glory's
Long days of high delight
With your eyes as blue as sunlit seas
And neck of swansdown white,
Dreaming of Summer glory's
Long days of high delight.

For Autumn the avenger
Was never known to spare,
On your ivory brow he'll carve his claim
And coin your silver hair,
For Autumn the avenger
Was never known to spare.

And you must climb in season
The road which none descend,
With your pride in dust beneath your heels
And love your only friend,
When you shall climb in season
That road which none descend.

AFTER MANY DAYS

ROBIN ATTHILL

MY poem is the bread cast upon the waters
in a cavern where the sea-magic of the waves
washes in delight the tortured spirit, the golden spear
of the first crocus that flowers from the iron land,
Bethlehem star that beacons the rising year.

But no silver herald trumpets that bold
and blinding moment in the deadwinter world.
Sudden beyond all hope, like sunlight watered
after the sodden rain, from darkness breaks
the stammered wonder of words the starved tongue speaks.

PEARLS THAT WERE OUR EYES

EITHNE WILKINS

OUR eyes have grown too large for us,
swollen with trances,
coming backwards like drowned men.
We cannot see through these wet branches hanging across
the shiny globe,
drifting across the hollows of the washed-out brain.
We cannot see.
Even our hard infrequent tears are blurred with weeds ;
and when we walk,
as those are damned to walk who leave
even their crimes unfinished,
our steps are tangled, clouded up with broken promise and the swell
of unswept sea.

Now we are not able to shake off
so many millions for our second thoughts or turn
our faces like a picture to the wall.
Is it a wonder then our mouths fall open, thirsting
to bite this memory short ?
There is no shelter in the intellect ;
and peace—that was a debt we shall not pay
to skulls,
but weigh them down with stones.

Our hope has turned to stock and stone,
barren and furious,
parallel to death.
We are alone,
a tower of drowned men,
a short stream writhing in the grass.

WHO PASS THE SWINGING LANTERN

WILFRED H. BARTLETT

I AM amazed men choose the crowded way,
Scuffling the city dust with slavish feet,
While at the pavement's edge fresh breezes stray
Where trees are buildings ; meadows one wide street.

I wonder at the vanity of those
Who shackle every glory to a gown,
Yet pass the swinging lantern of a rose
Blind to the ruby-splendour rippling down.

I hear shrill laughter and the rush of words
From burning lips that haunt the babbling throng,
And sigh for the serenity of birds
Whose velvet tongues are softened to a song.

The glare of floodlit room, the flush of wine,
Glitter of glasses tinkled recklessly—
These set me yearning for the lovelier shine
Of star-wan sky, and moon-glow on the sea.

And when the ruffled city leans on sleep,
I marvel that the dark, uneasy hush
Sends only me to wander where the deep
Grey waves of quiet break on every bush.

BLUE IS THE EAST . . .

M. J. STEVENS

BLUE is the east of you
My peace, my pleasure ;
Measure your lanterns
On the evening air.
Rare is the hometrack
Over hills descending,
Ending my anguish
And my heartache there.

High to the west of you
My dove, my darling,
Starlings still flicker
Down night-acrid air.
Fair dawns the first moon
Over withied waters.
Daughters of Dreamland
From the forest stare.

Still is the best of you
My boon, my blessing,
Dressing my day-dreams
In this alien air.
Bare to the burning
Mourns this lover only
Lonely chill pastures
And your moonlit hair.

NOCTURNAL

ERNST SIGLER

I HAVE forgotten some : the wild cool girl
whose trembling oracle promised such lissom fame
and the somnolent poet who became
the evergreen's uncontested lover.
Some who before I die will speak their love :
you hear me, Aguecheek, and you, Cyrano, do you hear ?
The hour is late. And nowhere soothes your frail tread.
Only a laughter comes but that too will at last
rest lingering in my barren throat, and I
shall observe all hopeless scared eyes and recall
the scythe and the timorous stubbles everywhere.

DESOLATE SANCTUARY

STANLEY SNAITH

IT is easy to say, *I am alone and free.*
Any man can bolt the door and bar the gate.
But what if the sanctuary
Be desolate ?

A roof that admits the cold gaze of the stars,
Hingeless doors, casements not proof to weather,
Mock what is done by bars
Or bolts either.

I grew the house from myself, in hermit fashion,
Made it an outer vestibule to the mind ;
In a cell of contemplation
I groped, lost and blind.

Now moss crawls on the floor, the neurotic bat
Like a limp jacket hangs on the rafter post,
And the corner-hugging rat
Grates on a crust.

A man surrenders as he bars the gate,
Betrays his kind who suffer, endure and wait ;
The wounds of the world will never let him be,
And though he cry, *I am alone and free,*
Already desolate
Is the sanctuary.

CLEAVAGE

ELLODE COLLINS

THOUGHT is the worm that eats the root,
The frost that stills the rising wave,
Canker of even Shakespeare's rose.

Live in the mind, you'll rue the blood ;
Live in the blood—you cannot tear
Your eyes from that lit winding stair.

Follow the light to greater dark,
The impasse and the doorless wall ;
Worlds broken in the head of man.

All the white science, the ideals,
The abstract thesis, never could
Still the dark hammerings of the blood.

Love with the head, decry the flesh ;
Live in the heart, a hungering brain.
Never the perfect balancing.

So shall the struggle be—till this,
That man a beast or angel is.

LEVIATHAN

MARGARET CROSLAND

IN the great ocean of our love, whales
are the utterance to swing our being's tide.
Huge and rare they move among the pride
of continents, the ice-floes and the trails
of sunset, shouldering thunder, breaking gales,
philosophers of storm. They school inside
our life, but with the anguished parricide
of monsters kill deeply when our courage fails.

Escaping try-works and the prize-doubloon
transformed leviathan abides like pity.
Defying any barb of love's harpoon
a saint has chartered here the tranquil city ;
sleeps Brendan anchored to eternity,
while dolphin-haloes glimmer round the moon.

SATURN IN CAPRICORN

JOHN BAYLISS

THE fire that forms below the fir
by armies lit, should let us take
new warmth and courage for delight.

Comrades, though wood and field be wet,
and roads lie white with frost and hare
show lonely track across the snow,
and mind and heart and hand be chill
against the frozen rifle butt,
let it be comfort to see this
brief snatching of the burning wood
and know that life may still be good
in spite of barren victories.

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My way has lain still near the known places :
Cambridge, where the water-combs
show white edges by the weir
and cafe lights over dark doorways
flash as in welcome,
or Waterbeach where the road curves
sharp as a swan's beak by the bridge
and the bomber wheels over the osiers ;
or that sand-pitted aerodrome
where pines stood sentry, and men died
going outside on a quiet night
up into the sunset.

Shall I now forget these things ?

It is not easy to forget delight's
uncertainties and so acquire
ability to move with hate—
be cradled on a cold machine
that kills a foe it cannot see.
I have lived peacefully in this country,
have harvested among the small hills,
picked blackberries upon its hedges
and seen the season out from red rose to wild rose,
watched it in rain and cursed it with reason
and planted my folly in Grantchester meadows.
Yet in this cold candle-end of winter,
examining my shadow in the grey half-light
after the candied delicacy of Christmas

and the mistletoe in the Officers' Mess,
I find little to be grateful for.
Knowing myself to have missed in life
whatever I sought because my desire
lacked eagerness and ultimate fire—
loafing the world like a wayfarer
who cannot share more than a surface pleasure
or be more firm than the outward form.
And I remember poets who sought harm
and died triumphant—Keyes in Africa,
Gervase who died in service of his God,
and older men who died for their ideal
were it in brothel or on battlefield,
for each man has his lodestar of delight
and he is right if he will follow it.
The single-minded man is king of kings,
rich his reward if lonely his pursuit.

Is it not wiser to forget these things ?
And read of others' deeds from day to day,
go to a play or face a cinema,
discuss what this man did nor quite how far
the enemy's retreat can safely go ?
Ebb out one's life as confident and slow
as caterpillar crawls to spider's web.
If not more wise, O how much easier
to strut a pavement than to stir a star !

So duty comes to cowards Heaven-sent,
to do it and no more, sufficient aim,
to take small pleasures tale enough for them,
this summary their broken net of talent.
O winter moon, give wisdom to forget
this sloth that I may take the past as past
remembering what lessons it still has,
and turn again into the busy haze
with eagerness to watch and act and live
with a free mind unparched by memories ;
and as a child's Spring bulb lies in the porch
and grows slow courage through the long dark days,
grant we may husband up desire and rage
until our fire may blazon from the earth,
its flower of beauty be of winged worth
and our achievement no forgotten thing.

THE POPLAR TREE

ALAN ROOK

IN the background of my childhood she stands
by all the waves and rocks of life unbroken
And all my shimmering heaven lies in her hands
and all my dreams of happiness her token.

An inland sea, a forest comprehends
the grief for depth her memory has awoken ;
a sea, a forest we, and where we end
the hills are born and the heart's landscapes darken,

fade and diffuse and soon confine our light
to that small acre uninfested yet
where birds sing, and we need no leaves' devotion,

grim war has not made manifest his might
there is no need of pity or regret
and love is deep, a sea, a limitless ocean.

CLIMBING THE BROW

J. RODERICK WEBB

CLIMBING the Brow, I leave,
near those who light the cross, a year or two,
and I am young in sunlight and I know
the afternoon is there to cycle through
with Flimby left behind, her houses as before
shaped and still leaning to the Solway shore.

For me the farms and fields :
the holy poverty of land still fit to be
what one may will and pray to see,
the light prayer dropping, curled within a leaf
for taking up and working into life
or crumbling in the frost upon the waste.

Between me and the landscape lies
that world of doubt, love and anxiety,
where though events of mind and hand may match,
they need the fusion of persuasive touch,
the burning of the dust on summer roads
matched by the trembling fury of the heart.

NOVEMBER LEAVES

A. V. BOWEN

AS I stole forth this darksome morn
Towards my factory forlorn
That makes a tomb of Bayswater,
I heard a runnel music stir
Unusual, in Oxford Street—
A woodland sound of airy feet.

It was November's autumn-march
Of leaves wind-swept round Marble Arch
That raced with forest-music rare
Along that flagstoned thoroughfare ;
A faery rabble, turned to rout,
Dancing the dirty night-time out.

And some stuck fast in doorways, dumb ;
And some stood on their heads ; and some
Sped up a frightened step or two ;
And one plunged sideways in my shoe ;
Another flew into my hair,
And whistled like a songbird there.

Then felt I like some singing tree,
All elfland in the heart of me,
O I was one of them, I guess,
A fate-blown mortal leaf, no less,
As I went singing on my way,
And danced the night out, even as they.

SUFFICIT

GLORIA KOMAI

THE years pass by like birds : how mark their flight
Upon the faithless sky ? O, how forget
White miracle of wings, the flying swans !

The years flow down the cheek of time like tears,
Blurred butterflies between our darkened eyes
And vision : look ! the rainbow is a bridge.

The years blow through our fingers : how hold them ?
Knowing the rose's heart, the height of song,
The spirit's conquest, knowledge is enough.

AFRICAN VILLAGE

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

HERE history is dwarfed, the shape of Time
Walks like a dark race through the tall, wild grass,
A child squats nakedly before a house
And draws the earth into its ancient eyes.
Thus would a tribal God reject the world,
Turn from an empire with this secret smile
And raise a small hand to the mighty sun.
Out of a mud-shack waterproofed with tin
The old crone leans her leathern, empty breasts
Once melon round and rich with mother's milk,
The teeming continent has drawn away ;
When all has gone she knows she will remain.

Night comes upon them like an evil friend
To work his magic and to beat his drums
Into the savage rhythm of their blood,
Kindling a red fire and a leaping dance
Where men are turned to shadows of the trees,
Their limbs ecstatic in a lustful trance.
Night and the deep, receptive women of the tribe
Lie and conceive the death of history,
Which sprang from this first primitive embrace
And shall return into this fleshy womb.

But morning comes and brings the brassy sun
To burn its seed into the savage earth,
And hold communion with the ancient child
Who stares at nothing with his inward eyes.

ENVOY

JEAN KENWARD

TIME who imprisoned Helen's kiss
In the dry skull's metropolis
Does of unyielding custom rate
Beauty and Death most intimate.

So lily fawn and leopard young
And iris with a lizard tongue
And nightingale and lovers' folly
Alike are moved to melancholy ;

River, rover, meadow-grass
And rhyme (and rhymers too, alas)
Are but as swallows, soon flown
Into darkness, the unknown.

O, there shall be no recompense
For reason or for common-sense
Nor any man hear siren song
Though it be loud, though it be long . . .

Therefore my friend, since fish and star
And all things that most lovely are
Here find a lasting alibi—
So shall yourself, and so may I.

PARABLE

IAIN FLETCHER

GIRL in the tower to whom our times are calm,
no Prince comes laughing over the white lawn ;
the forests beckon with invisible balm,
each tree being haunted like a thing withdrawn.
The mist is big in all the world outside,
though sometimes to the watchers it appears
your precinct is more decorous and wide
than all without that saddens for your tears.

They have beseeched you to come down the stairs,
thinking your life must follow after theirs
since the cold dragon has been dead for years.

But some perhaps will know your tower
is not your prison, but trophy of your power,
and when they come your breast will wear a flower.

HERO OF OUR TIME

EDWARD TOEMAN

O CHARGE those bells to ring
atonal threnody for him ;
in shaven sound impinge
upon the sullen wind.

One who turned to the cruel highway
in baffled certitude,
armed with the cordial phrase,
decked with the errant tune.

Not that he cared to arise
from the cotton mesh of his dreams,
strive on to further boundaries,
hew out new themes.

Nor realised that they
thumbed out the wistful flame,
hurled him in grithard greed
from servitude to death.

Could idly contemplate
this vast erosion,
terrain where no spring flows
and beds are cracked and shriven.

O charge those bells to ring
that even so, through him
the rose, from chiselled stone,
shall vein to a new germinal.

That undeniably they shall come
to garner till the harvest-home,
unmanacle man's atom and then
unpin his pining potency.

THE EARLY MUSICIANS

E. M. FROST

THEY have signs, they march into the rooms
of the mind. They pour smoke from apparently
serene crystals. They leave lilies and angels
littered on the doorsteps of disaster.

They have bright bones, they have matchless
wings. They march into the fingertips
to incite a marvellous kingdom of creatures
each with his purpose to permit perfection.

They have a cloth of gold on what is told.
Fields of fine weather wear their winking
violins, and as peacocks burst into floral rain
so they branch their business in the cold skull.

They demand not the hot forehead of God.
They are not fishes to swim in the body's blood.
They have their signs that sing in the mind
and ponder in the swanlike brain of the suicide.

Each movement is a suicide for the violent Time.
O capably sterile, O neuter magnificent true-
heart. Think with me, they say, and each death
by a drip of a clarinet is a birth in their logarithm.

They have vines without fruit and landscapes
without lust. They have a God without love
and a Christ without wounds. They have the holy
look of the convolvulus moon, and they drown
where seas do not resent the falling-down.
And where they blind, the hard crust of the diamond
is inside. They are as sand beneath the sensual sun
that rubs and glitters but can never burn.

QUESTIONS

W. G. BEBBINGTON

I AM youth crying in the wilderness :
Where is the answer to my question ?
Who am I, and what are you
That we should love
And think it so important ?

Not to accept like animals a happiness
But struggle after some abstraction,
Analyse the glistening dew,
Look above
At stars for God, and grant

The moon a certain sentimental loveliness

While chiefly wondering what it's there for—

This is the deadness youth delights in !

But I am young and I am sick
And I am not delighted
Spending all my days and nights in
Asking how and what and wherefore.

No, give me limbs and branches quick
With life and not affrighted
By a thousand futile questions ;
Make me but a beast
And keep your human avocations
That I may live, at least.

PROVENÇAL STORM

SHEILA BOLTON

RAIN-LOADED olive in a silver sack
Of leaves on crooked pollard
Ties its root in dust. The twisted back
Of mistral cypress lengthens green, gone laggard
For lost shadow. Bastioned,
The roads invade a wind upon the hills
In crevices of pine, crescendo questioned,
Whose stems split nerves of light with narrow drills.
The bitter villages are shuttered frugally,
Their walls confuse like knives against the sky.

THE FUGITIVE CHILD

GEORGE SHIERS

NOW you are young, how eagerly you run !
You twist and wriggle into secret places ;
Or rush unheeding down the wind's wide streets
Shouting your defiance, aiming your postures
With rapturous abandon in our faces.

And while you tumble, keenly and so cleanly
Across the open hills—wild hair streaming—
Quick envy rises for your lovely limb's
Fantastic motion, past all our knowing,—
Past all our pale days, further than dreaming.

For you are splendid in the moment now,
The apex of twin achievement meeting
In your eyes ; full promises of urgent boughs
Reaching through you to some rich harvest
Incredible as the rose, and no less fleeting.

But fleeting petals fall, you cannot tell
 How soon the fruit forgets the precious bud ;
 The rising blood suffices in the rising :
 Those eager dreams will turn from tenderness,
 Turn soon and harden. O fugitive child !
 Fleeing from us, racing wild,
 You also race from your own happiness.



AN ASPECT OF MODERN POETRY

DURING the war the public for contemporary poetry has grown considerably but it still remains pathetically small. To a vast number of intelligent readers all verse from Eliot onwards is just 'that modern poetry,' something which they have given up trying to understand, and which no longer arouses even curiosity.

Why is this so ? Obscurity alone does not explain it. Much good modern verse is not obscure at all, and little of it is really more obscure than, say, Blake's *And did those feet in ancient time*, which is sung with enthusiasm at Women's Institutes. The average reader does not notice whether a poem is obscure or not if he is lulled by the sort of rhythm and diction and imagery which he is used to, and which has for him a strong evocative power. It is only when he finds unfamiliar rhythms and diction and imagery that he begins to worry about the meaning.

The question he asks, therefore, is really this : "Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth all wrote in language and form which is recognised as poetry ; why can't the modern do the same ?" The answer is that a true poet would as soon use another poet's toothbrush as another poet's words. For each age laboriously creates its own poetic language and style and then destroys it. Words and images become so thumbled and slobbered over that they are blurred and vague. The reader becomes immune to them as he does to a laxative.

"Ere 'neath slow-lifting lids are seen
 Thy dreamful eyes, which yet behold
 Those friends of an heroic mould,
 Who pledge thee there, in Hippocrene."

Such poetry is like music played on a bad gramophone with a blunt needle—it gives a weak emotive stimulus but says scarcely anything.

When poetry reaches this stage—and it happens periodically in literature—it is necessary to de-poetise it. In our century Eliot has been the chief agent in this work. His more startling lines are famous but the same process is at work in his quieter passages :—

“ Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
 And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
 Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows ? . . .
 I should have been a pair of ragged claws
 Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.”

Here every word has its precise meaning and is used because no other word will do, and the images exist in their own right, clearly and uniquely seen. This does not mean that poetry must always be deflated (not that it is deflated here) for after such a cleansing it is possible once again to use words which carry a nimbus of romantic or conventional associations. Thus you will find words like ‘ golden ’ and ‘ rose ’ in the poetry of David Gascoyne and in Eliot’s later work, and images taken from medieval legends in the poetry of Henry Treece, Vernon Watkins, and others.

And so the sequence of discovery, fruiting and decay goes on, and the reader who is at first bewildered can be sure that his very bewilderment may help to sharpen his own awareness not only of the significance of poetry, but of the significance of life.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

REVIEWS, &c.

GANGREL. Edited and published by J. B. PICK, 170 Westbourne Terrace London, W.2. 1/10 post free.

Can anarchy be formulated ? GANGREL, at least, fails to do this. We agree men must not degenerate into ants ; is it more desirable that they should be simply ‘ antis ’ ?

The peculiar value of individualism is reflected in the poetry of GANGREL. ‘ Modern ’ technique, already a tradition, stands tolerantly beside the rich rhythms of *Eleusinian Myth* by Ross Nichols, clear simplicity of Muriel Grainger’s *Annunciation*, the crisp yet diffident subtlety of Lawrence Durrell . . . even a wistful echo of Donne !

Adherence to irreproachable standards is certainly not twisted into sectional discrimination. The poet (and his readers) should return thanks.

CYRIL HUGHES

MUSIC AND POETRY. The music and poetry meetings at the Ethical Church Hall, Bayswater, which were so successful in spite of black-out and bombs will be resumed at the end of September. It is hoped that under peace conditions this artistic experiment will prove capable of valuable development. Poets desiring to read their own work and all who would like to receive details of times and programmes should apply to ALEC CRAIG, 59 Oakwood Road, Bricket Wood, Herts.

Printed by The Faval Press Ltd.

and published by The Editor at 59 Orchard Avenue, Squire’s Gate, Blackpool.